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Three convicted of drug trafficking charges

Providence Police arrested the three in June in a crack house on Burnside Street

A federal jury has convicted **Charles Brown, Charles Isler, and Bilal Abdul Rashid**, all of Providence, of drug trafficking charges stemming from a Providence Police raid in June 2003 of a crack house on Burnside Street. The house featured sophisticated security devices and a green light on a back porch, which detectives believed signaled that the dealers inside were open for business.

The Office of the United States Attorney announced the verdict, which the jury returned yesterday after a week-long trial and approximately eight hours of deliberation. The three defendants are detained in federal custody pending sentencing in April by U.S. District Court Judge Mary M. Lisi, who presided over the trial.

The jury convicted Brown, 32, of 178 Burnside Street, where the crack house was located, of trafficking in more than 50 grams of crack cocaine. Under federal sentencing procedures, he faces a non-parolable life sentence. Isler, 33, of 48 Glenham Street, and Rashid, 28, of 138 Linwood Avenue, were each convicted of trafficking in less than five grams of crack cocaine and faces up to 30 years in prison.

During the trial, Assistant U.S. Attorney Adi Goldstein presented evidence from Providence Police detectives that the Narcotics, Firearms and Organized Crime Bureau had been

investigating the activities at 178 Burnside Street after developing information and receiving complaints about suspected drug trafficking there.

In June 2003, Detective Scott Partridge conducted surveillance on the house and observed that the rear entrance to the first floor apartment had a rectangular slot in the door that could be used for drug transactions. The entrance was a double door, fortified with a steel gate in the middle. The house was equipped with surveillance cameras. There were a green lamp and a red lamp in the back hallway.

“The first floor of 178 Burnside was dedicated to the sole purpose of selling crack cocaine,” Assistant U.S. Attorney Goldstein said to the jury at the start of the trial.

Cheese Puffs container

On June 3, Detective Partridge observed Brown arrive at the house in a car and remove a plastic bag, containing what later proved to be crack cocaine, from a brown paper bag and place some of its contents into the bottom of a Cheese Puffs container. He left the Cheese Puffs container in the car and took the brown bag into the first floor apartment.

A short time later, Detective Partridge and other Narcotics Bureau detectives executed a search warrant for the first floor apartment. To gain entrance, they had to ram the outside door and pry open the inner door. Brown, Isler, and Rashid were inside and, after a struggle, were placed in custody.

In the apartment, detectives found on a table in the kitchen the brown paper bag, which contained 142 grams of crack cocaine – also known as cocaine base. Next to the drugs were various items used in the packaging and sale of crack cocaine, including numerous small plastic bags, a digital scale, a razor, and baking soda. Also on the table was a split screen television

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displaying four camera views of the perimeter of the house. In the bathroom, in an overflowing toilet, detectives found 26 baggies containing about 6 grams of crack.

In the car in which Brown had arrived, detectives found the Cheese Puffs container, which contained about five grams of crack cocaine.

Before the trial, the U.S. Attorney's office served notice on all three defendants that, because of their prior drug convictions, they faced enhanced sentences if convicted. Brown was convicted of the most serious charges in the indictment – conspiracy to distribute in excess of 50 grams of crack cocaine and possessing with intent to distribute in excess of 50 grams of crack cocaine. He faces a possible life term, from which there is no parole. Brown was also convicted of possessing with intent to distribute more than five grams of crack cocaine – representing the crack found in the Cheese Puffs container in the car.

Rashid and Isler were each convicted of conspiracy to distribute and possessing with intent to distribute less than five grams of crack cocaine. Because of their prior drug convictions, each faces a statutory maximum penalty of 30 years in prison. Federal sentencing is based on guidelines that take into account such factors as the exact nature of an offense and a defendant's criminal background.

The **Providence Police Narcotics, Firearms and Organized Crime Bureau** and the **Drug Enforcement Administration** investigated the case. Assistant U.S. Attorney Goldstein is prosecuting it.